

LIFE-LONG CHAMPION OF THE HELPLESS BLIND REDEDICATES FUTURE AS WIFE TO THAT SERVICE

Winifred Holt, Bride of Rufus Graves Mather, Converts Wedding Gifts Into Fund She Is Raising to Aid Sightless

SERVICE!
If but one word were permitted in characterizing Mrs. Winifred Holt Mather, of New York, that word would be service.

As Miss Winifred Holt, which she was until Thursday when she changed her name to Mrs. Mather, she years ago dedicated all her efforts to the relief of the blind in New York and abroad.

For sixteen years she has worked long and hard—a weary, discouraging struggle at first, with few to give encouraging words and fewer still to give encouraging dollars, and many to lift their hands in horror at a new faddist turned loose to plead for money. But it was no fad with Mrs. Mather—it was a life work, and her wedding was the culmination of a romance nurtured by a mutual interest.

For three years Mr. and Mrs. Mather were engaged in similar work—aiding the blind. This interest is not going to end at the altar, but the marriage ceremony is a joining together of hand and heart for more united efforts in behalf of those deprived of sight.

The wedding was what Mrs. Mather termed a "rededication to service," so, when a bride, she garbed herself in a rather unusual way.

Her wedding dress was a beautiful thing of silver and white brocade made after the style of the fourteenth century—very stiff and formal it was, but the most unusual feature was a long priest-like stole, symbolical of her call to service. She wore a veil, for—service or no service—what is a bride without a veil? The veil was an old one that has been in the family for years and was worn by her aunt, Mrs. Campbell Mortimer, on her wedding day.

The ceremony, performed by Dr. Manning, Bishop of New York, was in the Lighthouse, the concrete realization of Mrs. Mather's dreams—the home where the blind are taught useful trades and occupations. She was attended by blind girls as bridesmaids, and Mrs. Mather said of the guests:

"Our guests will be only those whom we have to ask—as family and family friends—those whom we love and those who have helped in any way to pass along the torch of light."

Wedding Becomes a Service of Rededication
And so it was a novel wedding, this "rededication to service." Rufus Graves Mather, the bridegroom, is descended from the first president of Harvard, Dr. Richard Mather, who came to this country in 1635, and his unselfish work proves that the many generations of life in America have failed to dim the noble spirit of self-sacrifice of the Puritan fathers. For hearken to the most unusual thing about the whole affair.

Mr. and Mrs. Rufus Mather had requested their friends to send them no presents of the ordinary sort, but to send money for the purchase of a Lighthouse for the Blind in Paris—it is necessary to raise \$500,000 by December 16, or the home of many blind men in Paris is taken from Miss Holt and her work of years will come to naught.

Instead of the thrill of opening wedding presents and pulling out Aunt Maria's gift from wads of excelsior, and of course, strewing the excelsior all over the floor, or instead of shaking boxes and guessing what is in them, Mr. and Mrs. Mather opened letters, and many very substantial checks were their reward.

"If this \$500,000 is not raised, just one month after we are married, we will see one of our dearest works ended. The blind in Paris, most of whom were blinded in the war, will lose their club-house. Since the war, 32,000 war blind have been reached by our Paris Lighthouse. It would be a crime, no less, to lose this place, it is so wonderfully organized. The men there have a complete Braille electric printing press where 100,000 copies of the near-related, blind soldiers of France. They have intellectual and manual training classes—and sixty-two men live there always—it is home to them."

"I wish I were tripler, so I could do all that I have to these next few days," said Mrs. Mather—only she was still Miss Winifred Holt when she made that remark, for it was then only her wedding eve. Just in from a final fitting of her wedding gown and ready to dash out to the rehearsal of the wedding itself, Miss Holt was snatching a bite of lunch in her home at 44 East Seventy-eighth street, New York.

"My, oh my, but I was hungry. Do you know what I did the other day? I was talking on the telephone and found myself trying to feed it with a spoon. This getting married is nerve-racking, is it not, Rufus?" and she looked smilingly at Mr. Mather, who sat with her.

"I call Mr. Mather the 'Lighthouse-keeper of Italy,' for it was he who organized the club in Rome to a great extent and he is now secretary of it."

Became Interested When Eight Years Old
"How did I first become interested in helping the blind—um, um—let me see," said she thoughtfully, with a bit of jam tart poised in mid-air. "Let me see, I guess I was eight years old when I was taken through a blind institution and it made a lasting impression on me. The idea that the people were seeing nothing but black and white stayed in my childish mind. Then later I was at the opera one night and there were two boys next to my sister. Their faces were so blind in spite of their poor eyes."

with a capital "C." And she had not thought it necessary to submerge her femininity and charm because of that fact. Her hair is not skinned tight back, nor has she adopted tortoise-shell glasses or flat broad heels. On the contrary, masses of dark fluffy hair frame her face, and when her dark eyes gaze at one kind lines and sympathy just beam out of them. And then her life work!

When most human beings see a man standing with a cup and a little sign reading "I am blind," they fiddle around in their pockets and



Mr. and Mrs. Mather discussing plans for furthering welfare of the blind

sightless eyes. I thought that the blind in New York might enjoy hearing music, even though they could not see the actors. And there was a third stimulus to my activity. A woman whom I knew, accomplished and cultured, was being sent to the poorhouse when I happened to hear about it. She was blind, and though she could speak four languages fluently, play several instruments and had all the attributes of a lady, she was useless, because of her infirmity and was going to the poor-



Rufus Graves Mather

house, hopeless and discouraged, saying over and over again, "There is no place for the blind." These things made me realize just what sad cases there were right here in New York, so I got busy. First I found several blind men and had them come to my own home and talk awhile, and before we knew it we had found a niche in life for them. Their worst torture seemed to be the fact that they were useless; that all they could do was sit in the dark, day after day, and do nothing. So we began finding them work they could learn to do—weaving and basketry and the like and the idea grew like a rolling snowball. Larger and larger it became and the knowledge of our efforts spread. One blind person would tell others, until we had so many interested that it was possible to have the first Lighthouse. The first had long since disappeared and, over a cup of coffee, growing colder minute by minute, as she mulls of her husband's greatest work, Miss Holt remained.

For she certainly had a career



Mather-Holt bridal party—Left to right, Prof. Frank Jewett Mather, who was best man; Mrs. Joseph Colt Bloodgood, matron of honor; Miss Winifred Holt, bride (now Mrs. Rufus Graves Mather); Bishop William T. Manning; Rufus Graves Mather, bridegroom; Henry Holt, father of the bride and who is eighty-three years old. In front, Winifred Holt Bloodgood, flower girl, and seated, Master Holt Bloodgood, page

up his head and face his fellow-men as an equal. In most families a blind member was either terribly spoiled and pampered and convinced that he is useless, or he is neglected and made to feel his infirmity by being told constantly how much in the way he is and how absolutely good-for-nothing is his existence. A little job would change the attitude of both classes. When it becomes apparent that the afflicted one is able to make money by his own efforts and becomes self-supporting, the character of the whole family changes. And how grateful becomes the blind person!"

Some of the cases are on the verge of suicide when they are found. Suicide seems so easy—such a simple way to end their misery. No one to know and no one to care. But then like a light in the darkness would come the message of Miss Holt—her wonderful mission of making self-respecting men and women from those who are down and out. They are given the satisfaction of work, supporting, and engraving. Their "useless" life is at an end and all through the unspeakable tolling of a woman—a woman who saw the light and followed it. Oliver Herford wrote as a

Has Gained Fame Far and Near for Unselfish Efforts to Find Happiness for Afflicted

little poem, and oh, dear me,—in an aside to her maid—"send my black satin pumps out to them." As she resumed her discourse, "Awful, isn't it—I have only one pair of black pumps and they have a slit right straight across the toe!" said she with a whimsical smile.

"Yes he wrote us a poem that goes like this: 'The love is blind, Love is king. Good people, hearken ye! It is the king commands this thing For those that can not see.' 'Isn't that beautiful?' and Mr. Herford made the sweetest remark at the time he illustrated the poem for us—in the illustration he has Cupid perched on a rainbow and he said to me—'So sorry the rainbow is off-color, but I couldn't get one to sit for me that morning.' 'Wasn't that nice?'"

"This work of mine began at home, but it spread. During the war I took the idea to France and it is this French Lighthouse that we are now trying to save. When we spread to Italy, where blindness is very prevalent, Trachoma is the usual form it takes, and since that is so infectious, we have not only to aid those already blinded, but we have to prevent the spread of blindness. It was in Rome that Mr. Mather and I first met, wasn't it Rufus?" and Mrs. Mather having acknowledged the correctness of this statement, Miss Holt continued.

"Mr. Mather was in Italy doing at the last time I was in France I saw seven one-eyed blind men huddling away for all they were worth, with the most contented faces imaginable," said Miss Holt. Before our Lighthouse started they would have sat day after day in darkness, with nothing to look forward to, but a tomorrow just like the hopeless today. Now in the clubhouse the men are taught whatever trade is suitable for them, and

the blind, and she writes beautifully. "And I'm going to let you in on a little secret—tomorrow a book of mine is coming out. It is just a collection of stories and is called 'The Light That Cannot Fall.'"

"The Lighthouse is one only in name—built just like any ordinary New York shop, except that in the center of the show-window there is a miniature lighthouse, with a revolving light, and in this shop the works of the blind are for sale—brooms and chairs and caps, seats, hats and scarfs, woven brooms, baskets of every sort and description, mats from tiny ones for the table to big ones that almost cover a room."

Miss Holt received a letter from President Harding commending her idea of giving her wedding dowry to aid the blind of France—and well he might, for look at all the furnishings Mr. and Mrs. Mather are going to have to do as a result of this generosity. No wedding-present lamps to sit around, none of those little pitchers and glasses that have been popular lately, and no chests of drawers—no nothing that brides and grooms delight in—instead, just check after check. It is not very exciting to go to the door and have the mail man deliver one registered letter after another and know beforehand that all the gifts received can fit into a little envelope, but this is what Mr. and Mrs. Mather are doing to save each other happiness for the shattered war-blind of France.

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Mrs. Rufus Graves Mather

istic research work—that means getting documentary evidence of the masterpieces of Italian art," she hastened to explain, noting quickly a mystified look. "He had not previously been interested in the blind, but from then on, he was wonderful and for three years we worked together, and now we have decided to join hands and continue the good work together. There is a great need for help now, since wood alcohol consumption results so frequently in blindness."

"You know," interposed Mr. Mather, quickly, "Miss Holt is very talented in a great many lines—she was quite a sculptor at one time, before she gave herself up completely to this work for

they have their games and recreation—bowling clubs and concerts and sing. Their Lighthouse over there has its keeper and crew, just as our three here in New York have—the same loyal and generous support from the workers. It would be a terrible thing to have to give it up," and Miss Holt gave slowly up from the table, and up set Mr. Mather.

"A dinner was given for us at the Colony Club, and everybody was enthusiastic about the project. Besides the letter from President Harding, Secretary Hughes, General Pershing and Ambassador Jusserand sent me notes telling how much they were in favor of our idea about the Lighthouse."

In this letter to Miss Holt, President Harding wrote: "It has been a most gratifying thing to note the establishment of these Lighthouses in Europe, and it would be a disappointment beyond measure to have this new undertaking fail because of lack of funds. I am very sure that the situation need only be brought to the attention of those who desire to be helpful to make certain of the success of your enterprise. I am more than glad to be considered a patron."

Miss Holt has already called \$3500 of her wedding money as the first installment of the \$500,000 fund necessary to keep the Lighthouse for its present use. This \$3500 represents two presents to Miss Holt, from her fiancé.

A special committee has been organized by friends of Mr. and Mrs. Mather to receive presents for her in cash, and William Forbes Morgan, 71 Broadway, has declared himself willing to serve as treasurer of the committee. Already a great number of gifts have come—some from admirers of Mrs. Mather, some from her friends, some from the lovers of France and some from those interested in philanthropic works in general, but \$100,000 the largest sum of money, and December 16 is the last day of grace. It will be exciting to see the race between the dollars and the days—know if the 16th of December will be on the world before the \$500,000 has been raised.

After her life of sacrifice for others, it would be a sad blow to Mrs. Mather to know that the slightly dollar count keep the fulfillment of her dream away—it would be too bad to see the Lighthouse closed and the Lighthouse keeper wandering without a home, all kept "patry dollars" sounds careless and nonchalant as though millions were lying all about, but \$500,000 is a rather small sum compared to the love and unselfish devotion of a woman to a cause.

It would be a bitter disappointment to more than one French point to see the cherry light from the Lighthouse give a last long blink and die—to have Mrs. Mather's dream fade, and instead of the Lighthouse of France be known as the world over as the "Light That Cannot Fall."



At left of picture is Mrs. Finley Peter Shepard. At right is Mrs. Lucy Work Hewitt. Between is Mrs. Rufus G. Mather